

Comfort care home will provide end-of-life alternative

Jeff Murray, jmurray@stargazette.com | [@SGJeffMurray](https://twitter.com/SGJeffMurray) 4:38 p.m. EDT June 23, 2016



(Photo: PROVIDED PHOTO)



Jim Dugan, of Painted Post, battled cancer for about four years, but when doctors determined there was nothing else they could do, he spent the final weeks of his life in a nursing home.

After Dugan died in February at age 68, family members realized the institutionalized environment of a nursing home probably wasn't the best option for him. But it was the only choice available, other than staying home, and given his condition, that wasn't realistic.

Now Dugan's family is working to establish a "comfort care home" in the Corning area, something that would provide terminally ill patients and their families an alternative to hospice care at home or nursing home care.

"In my brother's case, he was 200 pounds, and so there was no way his wife could help him. Home was not an option for him," said Dugan's sister, Joan Dugan Wilson. "So then the only other option in Corning was a nursing home. Nursing homes are much more institutionalized, and the caregiving is spread over many people. A comfort care home has only two people, and the care is 24/7. So you always have someone there for you. It's much more personalized, and it's around the clock."

There are currently comfort care homes in Wayland, Penn Yan and Naples but nothing near the Corning area, Dugan said.

She and other family members have submitted paperwork to establish a not-for-profit corporation and plan to either build a new home or remodel an existing house in the Corning area to serve as a comfort care home.

The home would be open to two patients at a time and also would offer amenities for their families, Wilson said.

Volunteers would provide round-the-clock supervision, and CareFirst (formerly Southern Tier Hospice and Palliative Care) would bring in professional hospice services such as nursing care and counseling.

"We are absolutely thrilled with the work of the family. What they went through and turned that around into helping others is awe-inspiring," said Robin Stawasz, CareFirst access director. "Our mission is to support families at the end of life through hospice, and we'll do all we can to help support them in that effort. There is a great need. We'll provide the skill sets, including nursing, social work and spiritual support."

The family doesn't have a location yet, but they do have a name. They plan to call the facility "Bampa's House." Jim Dugan's grandchildren dubbed him with that nickname.

The service will be free to patients. The Dugan family is accepting donations to help cover the cost of construction and the first year of operating expenses.

Fundraising is taking place through the Corning Lions Club. Jim Dugan was a past president of the organization.

A search for a location will continue during fundraising, Wilson said.

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"We're looking for land or even a tear-down or an older home that we could retrofit. It would have to all be on one floor," she said. "The bedrooms in these homes are really beautiful. We want to bring sunlight in, and provide access to the outdoors. A lot of people say things like 'I want to see the stars one last time.' We have to make access for that kind of thing."

Follow Jeff Murray on Twitter [@SGJeffMurray](https://twitter.com/SGJeffMurray).

How to help

- Donations for a new comfort care home in the Corning area are being accepted. Checks can be made out to the Corning NY Lions Foundation, P.O. Box 1096, Corning, NY 14830. Donations should be designating for "Bampa's House".
- Anyone with information regarding potential land sites or homes can contact Joan Dugan Wilson at 607-742-8562.